

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Orlando, Florida
October 11, 2011

The President. Thank you very much. Well, thank you. It is good to be in Orlando! It's good to be back in Florida. Some perfect Florida weather out there. To everybody who's watching, come on down to Florida. It's gorgeous.

We've got a couple of special people I want to acknowledge. First of all, your outstanding mayor, Buddy Dyer, is in the house; wonderful Congresswoman Corrine Brown. I want to thank CeCe Teneal for the outstanding performance. And I want to thank Alan Ginsberg and Mark NeJame for their wonderful hard work to make this thing happen. Thank you very much, everybody.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. I do. Although I have to say that backstage I had the chance to see Dwight Howard—[*applause*]*—and Dwight is a great friend, and I told him I'm a little heartbroken that the NBA season is getting delayed here. [Laughter]* So I'm hoping those guys are back on the court soon. In the meantime, I'm here because I need all of your help. I need your help.

I've come here because we've got to finish what we started in 2008. A lot of you got involved in that campaign back in 2008, and let's just remember, because sometimes there's revisionist history and everybody says, well, that was such a smooth campaign, and I say, that's not exactly how I remembered it. [*Laughter*]

We campaigned in 2008 not because we thought it was going to be a cakewalk. I mean, after all, you had a candidate named Barack Hussein Obama, so you knew that wasn't going to be easy. You didn't need a poll to tell you that that was going to be an uphill battle. [*Laughter*] But we forged ahead because we had an idea about what the country was, what it is, what it can be.

Many of you—your parents, your grandparents—grew up with a faith in an America where hard work and responsibility paid off, where if you stepped up and you did your job and you were loyal to your company and looked after your community, that loyalty, that responsibility would be rewarded with a decent salary and good benefits, maybe a raise once in a while, and you could raise your family and send your child to college and retire with some dignity and some respect.

But over the last decade, that faith was shaken. Rules changed. The deck kept being stacked against middle class Americans. And nobody in Washington seemed to be listening, seemed to be willing or able to do anything about it. And in 2007, all of this culminated in the worst economic crisis in our lifetimes, a crisis that's been much worse than your average recession. And it's been especially tough here in Florida.

And from the time I took office, we knew that because this crisis had been building up for years, it wasn't going to be solved overnight. It would take years for us to fully recover. But we understood that if we took some steps to start rebuilding the economy from the bottom up, that there was no doubt that America could be stronger, could be more fair, and could be more just.

So the question now, in 2011, is not whether people are still hurting. Of course they are. Every night I get e-mails and letters from folks from all across the country, and some of the stories are heartbreaking. And I meet folks in VFW halls and diners and men and women who tell me about having to close down a business that's been in their family for generations, or people who are having to cross items off the grocery list just so they can fill up the gas tank, or parents who have to put off retirement to make sure their kids can stay in college. So the question is not whether this country has been going through tough times. The question is, where are we going next? What does the future hold?

We can either go back to the ideas that tried and failed in the last decade. Where corporations write their own rules and the well-connected get tax breaks slipped into the Tax Code and ordinary folks are struggling. Or we can build the America that we talked about in 2008, and that we've been fighting for ever since: an America where everybody gets a fair shake and everybody does their fair share, an America where we're all in it together. An America where we're all in it together and we're looking out for one another, that's what this election is about. And that's what we've been fighting for since I got to Washington.

Think about what we've been through over the last 3 years. When we wanted to save the auto industry from bankruptcy, there were a whole lot of Republicans in Congress who said that's a waste of time, waste of money. They fought us tooth and nail. But you know what, we did it anyway. And we saved hundreds of thousands of American jobs. We made sure taxpayers got their money back.

And because we acted, the American auto industry is stronger. Ford recently announced its plants—its plans to add 12,000 new jobs in its U.S. manufacturing plant over the next few years, jobs making cars stamped with those three proud words: Made in America. So we're working to get manufacturing back here in the United States. We don't want to just import from other places; we want to sell to other places and make it right here with American workers.

When we wanted to pass Wall Street reform to make sure that a crisis like this never happens again and irresponsibility is not rewarded, we had lobbyists and special interests spend millions to make sure that we didn't succeed. But you know what, Orlando? We did it anyway. And we passed the toughest reforms in generations, reforms that prevent consumers from getting ripped off by mortgage bankers or credit card companies. And today, there are no more hidden credit card fees and no more unfair rate hikes and no more deception from banks. I tell you, they fought us every inch of the way, but we got it done.

We were able to cut \$60 billion in taxpayer subsidies to big banks and use the savings to make college more affordable for millions of young people out there. Most Republicans voted against it, but it was the right thing to do, and we did it anyway to make sure that our young people have an opportunity.

And because of the efforts of so many of you, we did what we've been trying to do for a century, and we finally got it done; we said that health care should no longer be a privilege in this country, it should be affordable and available to every single American. And we're in the process of implementing it right now.

So no longer can insurance companies drop your coverage for no good reason or deny you coverage because of a preexisting condition, and think about what that means for men, especially for women. Breast cancer, cervical cancer, no longer preexisting conditions. They

now have—insurance companies now have to cover things like mammograms and contraception as preventive care. No more out-of-pocket costs.

And while it's going to take a couple of years for the reforms to fully take effect—I see some young people here. We already have nearly 1 million more young adults with health insurance because of the Affordable Care Act. One million young people have the security that's needed.

That's an incredible achievement. Because of you, the Affordable Care Act is working. It is working to make the American Dream a little more secure. Because of you, I signed into law my first bill making sure women earn equal pay for equal work. I want all our daughters to have the same chances that our sons. And while we're at it, we appointed two brilliant women to the Supreme Court. We repealed "don't ask, don't tell," because anybody should be able to serve their country that they love.

In the last few years, as promised, we removed 100,000 troops from Iraq, ended our combat mission there, just like we said we would do. We're now transitioning our forces out of Afghanistan. We're taking the fight directly to Al Qaida. And because of the bravery of the men and women in uniform, Usama bin Laden will never again threaten the United States of America.

So we've made progress. We've made progress making our country safer. We've made progress making our people more secure. But we've got a lot more work to do. We've got so much more work to do to restore that sense of security that has always defined America. Making sure that everybody has got opportunity. Making sure anybody can get in the middle class if they're willing to work. And that's where I need your help.

Today the United States Senate is about to vote on the "American Jobs Act." Some of you might have heard about this. Everything in this bill is the kind of proposal that in the past has been supported by Democrats and Republicans. Everything in this bill will be paid for. It will put people back to work. It will put more money in your pockets. The Senate should pass that bill today.

Think about it. We've got a million construction workers, millions of construction workers, right now who are out of work. When the housing bubble burst they got laid off. This jobs bill says let's put those men and women back to work rebuilding our roads and our bridges and modernizing our schools. I don't want the newest airports, the fastest railroads built in China. I don't want the best schools built in Europe. I want them built right here in the United States of America. I don't want our kids studying in crumbling schools. I want our kids studying in the best schools.

There's work to be done right here in Orlando. There are workers ready to do it right here in Orlando. Let's tell Congress, pass this jobs bill today.

Pass this jobs bill and we put teachers back in the classroom. Now, this week I'm going to have a state visit with one of our closest allies, the President of South Korea. I had lunch with him a while back, and I asked him, "What's your biggest policy challenge?" He said, "You know, my biggest problem is, is that our parents are so demanding." *[Laughter]* He says, "They know education is the key to our future, so I'm having to import teachers to teach kids English in the first grade because they know that they want to succeed education." So they're hiring teachers as fast as they can, and what are we doing? We're laying them off in droves. It's unfair to our kids. It undermines our future. If we pass this jobs bill, thousands of teachers in every State will be back in the classroom where they belong.

If Congress passes this jobs bill, companies will get tax credits for hiring America's veterans. We ask those men and women, our family, our friends, to leave their careers, leave their families, risk their lives to fight for our country. The last thing they should have to do is fight for a job when they come home.

The "American Jobs Act" will cut taxes for almost every worker and small business in America, give an extra tax cut to every small business that hires workers or gives workers a raise. You've got Republicans in Congress who keep on talking about, "We've got to help job creators." Don't just talk about it, actually do something. Pass this jobs bill, and every single one of those job creators will have more money to hire.

Now, a lot of folks in Congress, they'll tell you, "Well, we may support some of those ideas, but it's got to be paid for." Well, I agree. It does have to be paid for. We have a deficit, and we've got to tackle it in a serious way. So recently, I laid out exactly how we should pay for it—pay this debt down over time and pay for the jobs bill. It's a plan that adds to the \$1 trillion in cuts that we already made during the summer, one of the biggest spending cuts in history.

When people talk about we need to shrink the deficit, we just made some tough cuts. And we're willing to do more. But we can't just spend—we can't just cut our way out of the problem; we've also got to grow our way out of the problem. We've got to invest in those things that help us grow and put people back to work.

And our plan says if we want to close our deficit and put people back to work, then we've got to do it in a balanced way and a fair way. It means that, yes, we've got to make some tough choices, make some tough priorities, get rid of programs that don't work so we can fund the ones that do. But we've also got to ask those who've been most blessed by America—the wealthiest, biggest corporations—we've got to ask them to also do their fair share.

We've got a Tax Code that's all messed up, and we need to reform it. Now, Republicans say they want to reform it too. That's great. We're happy to work with them, but it's got to be based on a very simple principle: Middle class families shouldn't pay higher rates than millionaires or billionaires. Warren Buffett's secretary shouldn't pay a higher rate than Warren Buffett. A teacher or a nurse or a construction worker making \$50,000 a year shouldn't be paying a higher rate than somebody making \$50 million a year. It's not right, and it's got to change.

Now, I want to be very clear here: Nobody wants to punish success in America. The Republicans talk about "class warfare." That's—our goal is to make success available for everybody. What's great about this country is you've got a good idea, you've got a service that nobody else has thought of, you know what, go out there, start a business, make money. I want everybody out there to be rich. That's great. Anybody in America should be able to make it if they try.

But none of us make it on our own. Somebody—an outstanding entrepreneur like a Steve Jobs, somewhere along the line he had a teacher who helped inspire him. All those great Internet businesses wouldn't have succeeded unless somebody had invested in the Government research that helped to create the Internet. We don't succeed on our own. We succeed because this country has, in previous generations, made investments that allow all of us to succeed.

So this is the land of opportunity. But we have to remember, those of us who have done well, we should all pay our fair share in taxes to contribute to the Nation that makes our success

possible. That's not class warfare. That's not an attack on anybody. That's just common sense. That's just fairness.

So when you hear Congress dusting off those old talking points and talking—calling this class warfare, I just have to remind people, 26 years ago, another President said that closing tax loopholes that benefited special interests, the most affluent, he said these Tax Codes that made it possible for millionaires to pay nothing while a bus driver was paying 10 percent of his salary, that's just crazy. It's time we stopped it. You know who said that? That was Ronald Reagan. That was Ronald Reagan.

So I don't understand what these other folks are arguing about. They all say that Ronald Reagan is their guy. [*Laughter*] I'm agreeing with him. I know they've got short memories, but I don't remember Republicans accusing him of engaging in class warfare. He was expressing common sense.

So, you know what, if asking somebody like me, who's done very well, to pay the same tax rate as a plumber or a teacher or a bus driver makes me a warrior for the middle class, I'll wear that as a badge of honor. I'll wear that as a badge of honor. I don't mind, because ultimately, this is about priorities. This is about choices.

It would be great if we didn't have to pay any taxes, nobody, and we could still have great roads and great bridges and great schools and high-speed rail. But you know what, if we want to put people back to work, if we're not willing to just settle for the status quo, if we want to invest in the future, that money has got to come from somewhere.

So would you rather keep tax loopholes for oil companies, or would you rather put construction workers and teachers back on the job? Would you rather keep tax breaks for folks who don't need them and weren't really even asking for them, or do you want to invest in education and medical research and new technology? Should we ask seniors to pay thousands of dollars more for Medicare, which is what some of the Republicans in the House have been proposing, or should we ask everybody to pay their fair share?

That's what this debate is about, and that's what's at stake right now. This notion that the only thing we can do to restore prosperity is to eliminate Government, keep tax breaks for the few, and tell the many that you're on your own, that's not how America got built. That's not how America got great. That's not the story of this country.

We are rugged individualists, and we're strong, and we're self-reliant. And we believe in the principle that everybody who is able and willing should work—everybody who is able should be working out there. There's no free lunch out here. And it's been the drive and the initiative of our workers and entrepreneurs that's made this economy the engine and envy of the world. And we believe in the free market, and we believe in people going out there and pursuing their dreams.

But there's always been this other thread in our history that says we're all connected, we're in this together. There are some things we can only do together as a nation. We don't have a system where we all rely on our own private services to put out fires. We realize, you know what, it works better if we've got a single fire department. We don't decide that somehow each of us are going to have our own private army. We decide, you know what, we should kind of pool our resources and make sure that this Nation can defend itself.

Republican Presidents like Lincoln and Eisenhower, even during difficult times, they invested in railroads and highways and science and technology. And after the war—after World

War II, when there were millions of returning heroes, including my grandfather, this country, together, said we're going to help these young people go back to college under the GI bill, and that's going to help lift everybody up. Everybody will benefit from a better educated workforce. Everybody—rich, poor, everybody in the middle—will be lifted up if the country is doing better.

That's why Michelle and I had the chance to succeed, because our parents instilled in us a sense of what it meant to work hard, but also because the country gave us opportunities, scholarships so we could go to college.

So no single individual built America on their own; we built it together. We're one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all and with responsibilities to each other as well as to ourselves. And right now we've got to meet those responsibilities in this time of great challenge.

There's some folks in Congress who may think, well, you know what, we'll just settle this all in next year's election. I've got news for them, the next election is 13 months away. The American people don't want to sit and wait. They need help now. There are folks living paycheck to paycheck. There are folks living week to week. They need action. They need action now.

So I need you to lift up your voices, help us out. Tell Congress: Pass this bill. And once we get this bill passed—and we're just going to stay on it. And if they don't vote for it today, we're going to stay on it until they vote for something. We're going to keep pushing.

And I'm going to need you to help us finish what we started in 2008. Let's keep building an America that we can be assured gives everybody opportunity. Everybody gets a fair shake. Everybody gets their fair share.

Audience member. Si se puede!

The President. Si se puede! We're not people who just sit there and watch things happen; we make things happen. We're Americans. We are tougher than the times we live in, and we're sure a lot better than the politics we've been seeing.

We're a people who can write our own destiny. And we can do it again, as long as all of you have that same sense of urgency we had in 2008. Let's meet this moment. Let's get to work. Let's remind everybody all around the world just why it is that the United States of America is the greatest country on Earth.

God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:03 p.m. at the Sheraton Orlando Downtown Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Alan H. Ginsberg, chief executive officer, The CED Cos.; Mark NeJame, founder and senior partner, NeJame, LaFay, Jancha, Ahmed, Barker, Joshi and Moreno, P.A.; Dwight D. Howard, Jr., center, Orlando Magic; President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea; and Warren E. Buffett, chief executive officer and chairman, Berkshire Hathaway Inc.

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Locations: Orlando, FL.

Names: Brown, Corrine; Buffett, Warren E.; Dyer, John H. "Buddy," Jr.; Ginsberg, Alan H.; Howard, Dwight D., Jr.; Kagan, Elena; Lee Myung-bak; NeJame, Mark E.; Obama, Michelle; Sotomayor, Sonia M.; Teneal, CeCe.

Subjects: Afghanistan : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Armed Forces, U.S. : "Don't ask, don't tell" policy, repeal; Budget, Federal : Deficit and national debt; Budget, Federal : Government programs, spending reductions; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Improvement; Business and industry : Automobile industry :: Strengthening efforts; Business and industry : Construction industry, decline; Business and industry : Small businesses :: Hiring incentives; Civil rights : Wage equality; Democratic Party : Democratic National Committee; Economy, national : Financial regulations, modernization efforts; Economy, national : Recession, effects; Economy, national : Strengthening efforts; Education : Postsecondary education :: Student loans, elimination of subsidies to private providers; Education : School improvement and renovation; Education : Teachers; Elections : 2012 Presidential and congressional elections; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Florida : Democratic Party event; Florida : President's visit; Health and medical care : Health insurance reforms; Health and medical care : Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act; Health and medical care : Young adults :: Insurance coverage as dependents, age limit extension; Iraq : U.S. military forces :: Deployment; Judiciary : Supreme Court :: Associate Justice; Science and technology : Research and development; South Korea : President; Sports : Basketball; Taxation : Tax Code, reform; Taxation : Tax relief; Terrorism : Al Qaida terrorist group; Transportation : Infrastructure, national, improvement efforts; Veterans : Hiring incentives.

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